# GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAM REVIEW AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

### **History and Current System**

The Iowa career program review evaluation system requires compliance with seven points as listed in rule 281 Iowa Administrative Code 46.7, subsection (4).

- 1. Compatible with educational reform efforts.
- 2. Capable of responding to technological change and innovation.
- 3. Meeting educational needs of the students and employment community including students with disabilities, both male and female students, from diverse racial and ethnic groups.
- 4. Enabling students enrolled to perform the minimum competencies independently.
- 5. Articulated/integrated with the total school curriculum.
- 6. Enabling students with a secondary vocational background to pursue other educational interests in a postsecondary setting, if desired.
- 7. Availing students with support services and eliminating access barriers to education and employment for both traditional and nontraditional students, men and women, persons from diverse racial and ethnic groups, and persons with disabilities.

The rule further states that the statewide evaluation system would contain indicators that would "encompass the requirements of both state and federal vocational education legislation."

The Department of Education is required by Iowa Code subsection 258.4(7) and by 281 Iowa Administrative Code 46.7(4) to annually review at least 20 percent of the approved vocational programs as a basis for continuing approval. Since 1996, Iowa community colleges have conducted annual internal reviews of 20 percent of their career and career option programs, and have submitted a summary report to the Department of Education, consistent with the rules established by the State Board of Education. The process of collecting and reporting the data reflected the technological and contextual limitations of 1996.

### **Pertinent Advances**

 The Department of Education and the 15 community colleges have invested extensive capital and human resources to create, test, and implement a state Management Information System (MIS). Much of the data collected through the MIS system duplicates data elements required by the Iowa Community College Program Review and Evaluation System.

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- Iowa Code section 260C.47 authorized the State Board of Education to establish and implement an accreditation process for community college programs by July 1, 1997. The accreditation process, cycle, and evaluation criteria were to be integrated with the accreditation process of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, now known as the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The Department of Education has coordinated the Iowa community colleges' self-study and visits with the HLC visit and added an interim self-study and visit at the five-year point.
- The HLC has added an alternative form of accreditation process, cycle, and evaluation criteria the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). The AQIP process uses the principles of Total Quality Management or Continuous Quality Improvement, and the Baldridge Criteria to create a constancy of purpose toward improvement. Several Iowa community colleges are now participating in the AQIP process. These colleges have learned that this continual process of analyzing, reporting, and improving academic programs duplicates the Iowa Program Review and Evaluation System. The intent of the Iowa Program Review and Evaluation System coincides with the intent of AQIP to use data in an ongoing review process for the purposes of program improvements.
- Federal Perkins reporting requirements have changed and performance data must be reported and analyzed on all programs. The reporting process has been converted to an on-line web-based system. Through the Management Information System (MIS) data collection, and specific year-end reporting for Perkins, the performance of each community colleges career and technical education program can be calculated on the state negotiated Perkins performance measures. These performance measures duplicate data elements contained in the State Board of Education-approved program review and evaluation guidelines. The current Perkins emphases on academic achievement and student retention are not reflected in the current community college program review and evaluation system.

### **Rationale for Change**

**Duplication**: It is clear that the State Board of Education-approved guidelines for the current program review system require collection of data duplicative of data collected through the community college MIS and the Perkins federal reporting requirements.

**Need for a More Flexible System**: The 21<sup>st</sup> century promises acceleration of the changes experienced in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Federal, state, legislative, economic, and educational changes pressure community college career and career option programs to meet national, state, and community needs. Measures of program excellence and relevance are continually being refined and improved. The Iowa Program Review and Evaluation System should encourage scrutiny, improvement, and innovation rather than compliance.

The ultimate purpose of program review and evaluation is program improvement. This use of evaluation information and data-driven decision-making is consistent with the accreditation emphasis on continuous quality improvement and the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) process of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Program evaluation is an essential component of the AQIP and should be integrated into accreditation and its timeline.

## <u>Major Components of the Community College Program Review and</u> Evaluation System

The following are the major components of the State Board of Education-approved community college program review and evaluation system:

- Continued compliance with Iowa Code subsection 258.6(7), 281 Iowa Administrative Code 46.7(4).
- Community colleges will continue to annually review at least 20 percent of the approved career and career option programs in accordance with Iowa Code subsection 258.6(7), 281 Iowa Administrative Code 46.7(4), and federal reporting requirements. For those programs that have an external <u>program</u> accreditation process, the external program accreditation self-study may fulfill the institutional five-year comprehensive program evaluation requirement.

It is essential that the seven (7) elements required by the state in the program evaluation process be thoroughly addressed in the program-specific accreditation self-study; therefore, community colleges must provide written verification of alignment of the program-specific accreditation criteria with the locally approved program evaluation process and the seven (7) required state elements. Copies of the evaluation studies and accreditation self-study reports (including the assessment) must be on file at each community college and be available for review during the state accreditation visit.

- The Department of Education will continue to annually extract data from the Management Information System (MIS) on all programs and forward them to the colleges. Regular reports utilizing MIS data are issued to the State Board of Education. Community college performance on the Perkins performance measures will be disaggregated by community college and by program.
- The Department of Education will continue to annually collect the required Perkins data on all programs and will provide reports to the colleges for program improvement purposes.

- The community college state accreditation protocol will validate that the college program review process meets the Iowa Code and Iowa Administrative Code requirements. The accreditation review will include the verification that the college is implementing its locally approved program review process, and that the results of these reviews are utilized for planning and improvement activities. Colleges will submit to the Department of Education their timeline for completion of at least 20 percent of the programs per year; the accreditation review will verify that the timeline is met.
- The community colleges may choose to expand to a broader definition of programs to include other instructional and functional areas of the institution, i.e., arts and sciences/college transfer, adult and continuing education, student services, economic development, developmental education, et. al.

### **Evidence of Program Review and Evaluation**

- Each community college will maintain an evaluation cycle for their local programs and supply it to the Department of Education on request.
- Each community college will have a locally approved process for program review and evaluation.
- Each community college will retain program reviews, Plans of Action for Program Improvement, and subsequent Progress on Plans of Action for review by the Department of Education and Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation consultant-evaluators.
- Items of evidence will be detailed in the "Community College State Accreditation Guidelines and Protocol."

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